

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5581

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Higher Education, February 19, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to mathematics and science education.

**Brief Description:** Creating a mathematics/science scholar diploma designation and scholarship.

**Sponsors:** Senators Kohl-Welles, McAuliffe, Shin, Tom, Berkey, Oemig, Clements, Keiser, Holmquist and Roach.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education: 2/08/07, 2/19/07 [DPS-WM].  
Ways & Means: 2/22/07.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5581 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means. Signed by Senators Shin, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Delvin, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Schoesler and Sheldon.

**Staff:** Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Tim Yowell (786-7435)

**Background:** There are a number of merit-based scholarship programs available in Washington. The Washington Scholars program recognizes the accomplishments of three high school students from each of the 49 state legislative districts. High school principals nominate the top 1 percent of the graduating class on the basis of academic achievement, leadership, and community service. Students can use the grants at any public or independent college or university in Washington.

The Washington Award for Vocational Excellence honors three vocational students from each of the 49 state legislative districts for outstanding achievement in vocational/technical education. High schools, skills centers, and community and technical colleges nominate students based on occupational proficiency, leadership, community activities, work experience, and other qualities. Students can use the grants at public two-year and four-year

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colleges and universities and accredited private colleges, universities, and vocational schools in Washington.

The Robert C. Byrd Scholarship is an invitation-only scholarship for high school seniors who demonstrate outstanding academic achievement and show promise of continued academic excellence. In addition, many community organizations, foundations, corporations, clubs, and civic groups offer scholarships to students.

**Summary of Bill:** A mathematics/science scholar designation for high school diplomas is created. It is awarded if a student: (1) earns four mathematics credits, including calculus; (2) earns at least three science credits, including chemistry and physics; (3) earns at least three credits of world language other than English; (4) receives advanced placement scores of three or higher on at least two advance placement tests; (5) has a high school grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 or above; and (6) meets state standards in all content areas of the high school level Washington assessment of student achievement.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) must award full tuition scholarships to students, beginning with their second year of undergraduate study, with a mathematics/science scholar designation for high school diplomas, if the student pursues an undergraduate degree in a mathematics or science-related field and if the student qualifies under the ranking system developed by the HECB. The ranking system takes into consideration: (1) the student's first year course selections; (2) first year GPA; and (3) other criteria found appropriate by the HECB.

The scholarships are funded through public and private contributions to the Mathematics/Science High School Scholarship Account. Disbursements are made by the HECB.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Higher Education):** An international baccalaureate may be substituted for advanced placement scores. The Washington assessment of student achievement standard is eliminated as a qualification. The designation on the high school diploma is eliminated. The first scholarships are awarded for the 2008-09 academic year.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Higher Education):** PRO: "Washington Learns" included recommendations to create scholarships in high demand fields. There are other fields that deserve special diploma designations, but the current focus on mathematics and science is most appropriate at this time. This program gives recognition and an incentive to study further. It focuses on true, sustained educational excellence. We need to get out of the trap of focusing on minimum standards.

**Persons Testifying (Higher Education):** PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Dr. David Burgess, Lake Stevens School District.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means):** PRO: Our economy needs more math and science majors. A good way to accomplish that is to identify the best students, and give them financial incentives to major in those fields.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor.